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ABSTRACT

There are many reasons for teachers' reluctance to address the issue of spelling content area vocabulary words; however, content vocabulary word spelling need not be ignored because of time constraints, boredom, or lack of knowledge on the teacher's part any longer. A method which can be utilized is an adaption of "Scratch, Scribble and Scribe" which is based on the Keep It Super Simple (KISS) principle. The method involves displaying the chosen vocabulary words on a large paper and then giving several quick tests throughout the week whenever there are a few minutes to spare. The tests are taken on scrap paper and graded by the students and then thrown away. This provides extra practice for the students throughout the week before the final test on Friday. This method requires little time and effort and is certainly better than ignoring the need to strengthen students' spelling abilities. (MG)

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Spelling Across the Curriculum

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A triangle with two equal length sides is an _____ triangle. A microscopic one-celled animal is an _____ Many farms in the Southwest United States use _____ to compensate for the lack of adequate rainfall.

Questions, similar to the ones above, appear daily on tests that span the curriculum for school children. Unfortunately, such tests are generally in a multiple-choice format which, of course, makes for easier grading. If the format is fill-in-the-blanks, then a list of possible answers is provided from which the students may choose. However, there are some teachers that require their students to memorize the spelling of certain content-area vocabulary words. This is sometimes worthwhile, but it can be sheer drudgery. If you do not have some system to teach and test the spelling of subject-unique words and you were to give a fill-in-the blank test (without a vocabulary list), the results would in all likelihood amaze you. You would probably think you were teaching an early invented spelling lesson instead of science or social studies.

There are many reasons for teachers' reluctance to address the issue of spelling content-area vocabulary words (e.g. science words, math words, social studies words). These reasons range from "It isn't that important" to "I don't have the time and it's too boring." to "I don't know how to teach spelling." These excuses are much like the "My dog ate my homework." that you have heard--they won't stand up to real scrutiny any longer. Besides, it may be that someday spelling text books will no longer be published and teacher-students must choose their own lists of words to learn to spell.

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Content vocabulary word spelling need not be ignored because of time constraints, boredom or lack of "how to" on your part any longer. You can bring your students' spelling vocabulary more in line with their writing vocabulary with a minimum of effort on your part. Wouldn't it be nice to know that most of your students not only know what a "laboratory" is, but they can also actually spell it correctly. The method to be utilized is an adaption of "Scratch, Scribble and Scribe," as originated by Cunningham, 1978. You may, of course, modify this system to meet your own classroom needs. But remember that it is based on the KISS (Keep It Super Simple) principle and that seems to usually work best.

1. Secure a piece of butcher paper (any color) approximately 2 ft. by 3 ft. and put it on your wall on Monday with five or six subject-area words of your choice printed in it. You can discuss the word meanings with the students.

2. Once a day or every other day, say "Scratch, Scribble and Scribe" at any time when there are a few minutes to spare. The students then get a piece of scratch paper out of their notebooks or desk (or off the floor?) and number their papers from one to five.

3. Next, the teacher calls out the words (e.g. laboratory, science, bacteria, virus, biology) and the students spell them on their scratch papers. The students <u>may look at the words on the butcher paper if they choose</u> as the teacher calls them out.

4. Then the teacher spells the words aloud and walks around the room as the students check their work. Or the students can all orally chant the spelling of the words as they check.

5. No grades are recorded; no one needs to tell how many they spelled correctly or incorrectly. The students can throw away their "tests" for that session if they choose.

6. On the following Monday, a new group of 5-6 words can be chosen and the process begins again.

On a test day (Friday) it would be appropriate to list 2 or 3 definitions and have the students insert the appropriate word correctly spelled from a previous "Scratch, Scribble and Scribe" list for extra credit.

You can modify this system to suit your individual needs. You can't deny that this is easy to use and requires little time and effort to accomplish and it is certainly better than completely ignoring the need to strengthen your students' spelling abilities. Additionally, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your students are "spelling literate" in your content area.

Bibliography

Cunningham, Pat. "Scratch, Scribble and Scribe: Can't Fail Writing Recipes." (mimeographed) Alamence County Schools.